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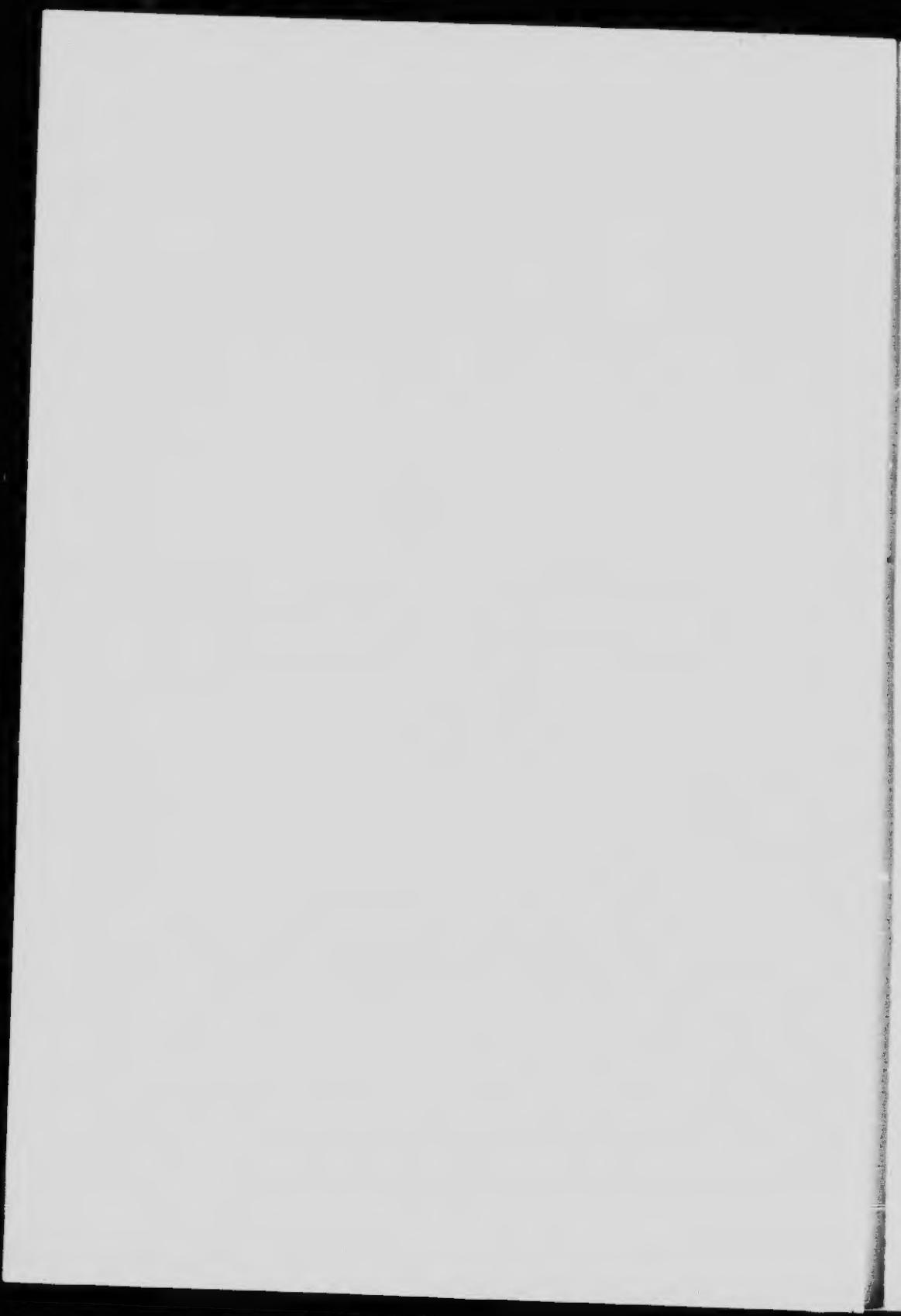
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Can. O'Malley Andrew



Yours sincerely,
O'Malley



SCNNETS
OF
A RECLUSE

— BY —

REV. A. O'MALLEY



AUTHOR OF
Shakespearean Lectures
Miscellaneous Lectures
“The Wreck of the Titanic”
“American Statesmen”

I dedicate these Sonnets to
my venerable friend, the Right
Rev. Mgr. McCann, V.G.

THE AUTHOR.

Foreword

SOME years ago I undertook to write a thousand sonnets, by way of apprenticeship, for a much more pretentious work. When I had completed seven hundred I concluded that such a mass of matter would be unwieldy in one book. I then decided to publish the thousand in two companion volumes; but later, on the advice of experienced authors and my publishers, I resolved to print them in ten small volumes, of which the present is the first.

The homely philosophy, dear reader, that you will find exploited here is such as every moralist is familiar with. Probably I should apologize for casting it in the mould of verse; but I was fascinated with the facility with which the numbers came, and so I am penalizing the public with my halting, uncouth Muse.

A. O'MALLEY.

St. Mary's Rectory, McDonnell Sq.,
Toronto, May 6th, 1915.

Preface

JT is a daring adventure in these days of heroic iliads, ephemeral verses, and fugitive compositions in rhyme, for a writer to publish his poems in book form, especially if these poems are cast in a sonnetal mould. But genius cannot be fettered, and an original and gifted mind, dowered with rich exuberance, will, when the spirit of poetry visits it, burst out in spontaneous gushings, or open for itself new channels through which the treasures of its thought will flow in rich and joyous currents. Again, genius, indifferent to criticism, is ever prepared to break all fetters of rules and suggestions, and, like the eagle, dares to soar aloft in its own independent flights.

Poetic composition is often allied to inspiration, and becomes an art only when inspiration is wedded to ideas and expressed in choice and correct language. The sonnet—which the author of “*Sonnets of a Recluse*” has selected for the cast of his ideas and inspirations—is, perhaps, the most trying and laborious form of poetic art, for its essential requisites are clearness, unity, strength, and harmony. As its structural frame is strictly a mental effort, its foundation must be laid in a cultivated and trained mind, in the exercise of vigorous thought, on reading and observation, and on an attentive study of the meaning and force of words.

To achieve success in his art, the student must begin by a diligent attention to the rules of grammar, acquire a thorough familiarity with prosody, and know and observe the maxims of logic. He must also remember that while rhetoric clothes ideas in suitable dress, logic

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must direct the mind in the selection of these ideas, leaving to the intellect the task of adapting the dress of rhetoric to the thoughts of the sonneteer.

There is no mental attainment that can surpass that of composition, for composition has power over the material of thought and supplies an aptness in all matters of arrangement, of argumentation, and of facility of expression. This mastership of composition belongs only to him who is trained to the habit of industry, of self-sacrifice, and practice, for:—

“True grace in writing comes from art, not chance,
As they move easiest who have learned to dance.”

The writer of these sonnets possesses many of these endowments and acquirements, and he has been singularly successful in weaving them into the texture of his meritorious verses—into a pleasing, poetic dress. To rhythm and cadence he is, as a rule, faithful, and in the general scope and spirit of his compositions he is happily at his best. Whether the beautiful and luxuriant world of his dreams and the gilded palaces of his poetic thought, within which he heaps his treasures, be ample compensation for his hours of labor, his watch, and vigil, he, of course, must be the appellate judge.

As we would expect, some of these sonnets are of a superior order, and for strength, clearness, sweetness, and beauty of finish rank in good company. If this expression of appreciation appear extravagant, let the

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reader turn to pages 57, 63, 70, 90, 92, 96, and analyze the sonnets which confront him. Take, for example, that on

THE SONNET.

“Give me, O Muse, to pour into this chalice
The wines of beauty, wisdom, truth, and love;
Give me thy alchemy thence from above,
To gild them brighter than angels in bliss.

Give me thy wand that with its joyous kiss
I may electrify my themes with life,
Unwonted in this vale of tears and strife,
I touch, and not my high ideals miss.

Then will I sing of God and His great world,
I'll trace His footprints' beauty, good and truth;
I'll see them in our race, the sun, the moon
and stars. I'll see them in the birds; forsooth,
In everything, for they're my constant boon,
And under them I march—God's flag unfurled.”

Here no word or phrase may be omitted, or substitute made without marring its perfection. With splendid imagery and pomp of purple word, the poet appeals to the Muse of Poetry for aid and help in the laudable task he is about to undertake. The sonnets which follow would seem to show that the Muse had heard and granted his appeal.

Yet, whatever may be the merits or demerits of the poems, the sonnets themselves do not fail to bear to the reader a certain impression of virility which, per-

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haps, belongs as much to the personality of the poet as to his compositions. Some of the sonnets seem to have been written with a readiness approaching improvisation, and while they manifest considerable skill in construction and expression, they, here and there—even though gift and culture belong to them—show an absence of reflection and of self-restraint, as if the composer were, at times, submerged in the exuberance of a perfervid imagination.

The range and variety of the subjects upon which he has written are surprising; he has exploited the organic and inorganic kingdoms, has explored the great depths, and, to give diversity to his theme, he has borrowed from the void and formless infinite, and :

“Meanwhile, whate'er of beautiful and new,
Sublime or dreadful in earth, sea, or sky,
By chance or search, is offered to his view,
He scans with curious or romantic eye.”

Though he has taken the liberty to think for himself and write for others, it will be noticed that few have excelled him in diligence and application or have obeyed more implicitly the canons of authority which define the rules governing the composition of a sonnet.

The sonnet, to arrive at maturity, ought to embrace only one general idea, which should be capable of indefinite elaboration. In finish and grace of expression, the Latin poets—Spanish, Italian, Portuguese—are superior to the English. By reason of the richness, buoyancy, and elasticity of their languages, the Latins have been able to express more elegantly and

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eloquently every feeling and emotion which gives vivacity and superabundant life to their sonnets. The English sonnet-writers are more contemplative and grave than the Latins, but are less emotional and passionate. Among an exuberant and volatile people, such as the Latins, this absence of emotional feeling constitutes a grave defect.

The most popular of English sonnet-writers, among Continental Europeans, is Mrs. Browning, whose fame is due, less to her genius than to the soothing influence of a Southern atmosphere, which gives warmth, color, and vivacity to her sonnets. Her "Songs from the Portuguese" are the best known and most appreciated poems in English literature.

As notable examples of sonnets of genius, we may here appropriately mention: Milton's sonnet on "Blindness," addressed to himself; Wordsworth's on "Milton," Shakespeare on "The Marriage of True Minds," Keats on "Looking Into Chapman's Poems," and, as a conspicuous example of genius, Shelley's "Ozymandias."

To most persons sonnet composition is a dry and difficult subject, but there are minds so constituted that that which is arduous and uninteresting is, for this very reason, alluring and pleasing.

To embody in a convenient form examples of the Petrarchan and Shakesperean sonnets, to express his thoughts in a simple but vigorous style, to give to the sonnets all possible advantage of method and arrangement, were the motives which governed the action of the author of this book. The scope of his labors has been to popularize the sonnet, to dispose and exemplify

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its use as a mode of expression, and, with scrupulous regard to the best usage and custom, to offer some contributions to our Canadian literature.

Those who are at all acquainted with the rules governing and limiting the composing of sonnets, cannot but appreciate the labor and talents expended in the writing and preparation for publication of this attractive booklet. "The number of ill-written books," writes Lord Bacon, "is not to be diminished by ceasing to write, but by writing others which, like Aaron's serpent, shall swallow up the spurious." The author has aimed at that kind and degree of originality which are to be commended in a work of this kind; he has borrowed no more from others than did the most gifted and popular of his predecessors. The art of writing sonnets approvingly may only be achieved after long and serious practice. It is an art that can no more be acquired without practice than that of the orator or the successful public reader.

Circumstances and an aptitude for the difficult having favored this bent of his genius, our author has voluntarily pursued the writing of sonnets with an assiduity which few may imitate and none surpass. Yet, he who devotes himself to the writing of sonnets cannot, in this age of commercialism, aspire to high praise nor stipulate for a large reward. However, the approving decision of those best qualified to judge of the inspirations of genius tenders him an adequate motive for his diligence and application.

Ambitious of making not a large but an acceptable book, the author has compressed into a hundred pages a few selections from a mass of material from which

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he might easily have written a folio. While preparing these sonnets for publication, he has been particularly careful to observe proportions, and, though at times didactic, he has been careful to avoid dialectics and abstruse metaphysics.

The average reader conforms more easily to fashion than to truth, hence it is vain to expect that that which is intrinsically best will by every one be preferred, or that which is meritoriously elaborate will be everywhere appreciated. But in the republic of letters there will always be those who can discern the difference between originality of style and expression and the weakness of imitation.

How far the poet has succeeded in the execution of his lofty purpose is left to the just decision of those best qualified to judge. If he should fail to receive that fair measure of appreciation to which his genius aspires, there will be left to him the consolation of knowing that great writers before him did not always succeed in their first appeals to the reading public. Indeed, the best and wisest writers often meet with discouragement and censure, staining, however, their equanimity, always remembering the answer of Warren Hastings to Mr. Sheridan: "He who possesses the least worth of his own, is ever the severest censor of the defects of others."

W. R. (DEAN) HARRIS.

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SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

I.—THE SONNET.

Give me, O Muse, to pour in this chalice
The wines of beauty, wisdom, truth, and love!
Give me thy alchemy thence from above,
To gild them brighter than angels in bliss.

Give me thy wand, that with its joyous kiss
I may electrify the themes with life,
Unwonted in this vale of tears and strife,
I touch, and not my high ideals miss.

Then will I sing of God and His great world;
I'll trace His footprints—beauty, good, and truth.
I'll see them in our race, the sun, the moon,
And stars; I'll see them in the birds, forsooth,
In everything, for they're my constant boon,
And under them I march—God's flag unfurled.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

II.—SLEEP.

Now all the fires smudge, and we weld but slow
The broken links; for darkness' sway
Holds all the forge, nor e'en a single ray
The smithy lights, though still the bellows blow.

The music of the anvil's sweet and low;
No vesper bell, but thunders harsh and loud
In its compare; and e'en the cock so proud
Would wake the dead—in happiness or woe.

Yet in the silent smithy of sweet sleep,
What marvellous mendings come to daily care!
And what a world of smiles tent on our brow,
As we weld o'er and o'er the broken plough—
Coin money—a whole mint—with much to spare,
For all who in sackcloth and ashes weep.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

III.—LOVE.

Uncertain as the sands, thou priceless treasure!

Aye, as the faithless wind and fickle wave!

Yet even old experience will rave,
And run again to taste thy ocean's pleasure.

For all men seek thee, aye, in fullest measure;

They've let thy seas in when with surge it roared,

And, oft o'erwhelmed, they have still more implored,
Only to find the tide went out at leisure.

Art thou then wanton? 'Tis not true. No! no!

Thou art as anchored as the solid rock

In breasts, where reason holds his rightful sway.

'Tis passions like the tide in ebb and flow,

That all fidelity in our breasts mock,

And, like the moon, the sea, our actions sway.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

IV.—THE HOSTEL.

High on the mount a higher citadel
Sits brooding, like the Spirit o'er the deep,
Making an ordered life from chaos leap,
For there dwell monks, each in his tiny cell.

At morn and eve they scour each crag and dell;
And send out scouts, St. Bernard breed, to scent
The trail, and bring to their hostel the bent
And burdened, from the gates of death and hell.

And this from choice! God bless these holy men!
They read full oft the sermon on the mount,
And left their homes, obedient to its call.
The Alps would be their Calvary, and all
The wayfarers would drink there, of the fount
Of charity, that flowed c'en to the glen.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

V.—THE DAWN.

I rose at peep of dawn with heart oppressed,
And wandered where the murmuring trees,
Brushed by the fingers of the morning breeze,
Oft welcomed me, their earliest human guest.

I heard the feathered fairies in their nest,
Chirping their psalmers—a psalmody of thanks—
To God. My heart at once leaped to their ranks,
And poured forth orisons with their own zest.

You breezes and you birds that charm the morn
With magic, I conjure you stay, oh stay!
And soothe the burdens and the heats of day!
Why should you cease your breathing and your song,
When mortals need you most, worn and forlorn?
Then stay, oh stay, and cheer the famished throng!

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

VI.—SPRING.

Spring breathes such sweetness as the breath of kine
Returning from the meads, adorned with dew,
And odours of the pine, that kiss and woo
The sense, like the old brews of Champagne's vine.

It paints the pansy with its eyes divine,
Steals for the violet cerulean blue,
And o'er a florida bursting anew,
It spills the cool night's clear and sparkling wine.

Ah! these brave skies, once cold with winter's look,
Have softened with the smiling sight below;
The sound of minstrelsy, the gay hallo,
That charm their amazed ears from nest and brook,
Till, ravished with intoxicating grace,
Their grimmest frowns have left nor sign nor trace.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

VII.—DEMOCRACY.

Let justice be the temper of our steel,
And tender mercy prove it to the foe
In trenches sleeping, or, o'erwhelmed with woe,
As dizzy with death in their graves they reel;

Or, conscious of their ebbing strength, they kneel
By their damp beds in prayer, dreaming of home,
Fireside and Fatherland—that friendly loam
May lap their clay, where now huge armies wheel.

While nought of right or wrong they feel
In their dear fate; democracy, awake,
Will one day on the ruthless tyrant take
Revenge, and justice's wound securely heal.
Till then the nations must dyke out the flood,
A mad man sluices of their own best blood.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

VIII.—THE HAND OF GOD.

There is a Hand unseen that drives the gale,
That curbs the whirlwind in its furious race;—
Reins in the river's reckless, raving pace,
And calms the ocean, when in hill and dale.

The stars that range the vasty night it rules,
The burning of the noonday sun it cools,
It warns the moon not to neglect the tide,
Fixes the shores that lands and seas divide.

It is the Hand of God—the great good God—
Who made them all by fiat of His will;
And each its nature in its kind ordained,
Aye! and in being till now has maintained.
I, too, am His, an humble, helpless clod,
Yet how my life, He rules with grace and skill.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

IX.—HIS MOTHER.

Who is she, stands there near the towering tree,
That flings its shadow o'er the farthest tide
Of heaven—a shadow that drapes all the wide
Earth, with surpassing grace and dignity?

Who is she, that held in her heart, the key
Of men's redemption, when she straight replied:—
“Behold the handmaid of the Lord,” nor tried
The cross to lurch, nor its great sorrows sea?

'Twas Mary, mother of the Lord, and He,
Before the day star dawned, and chaos sighed,
Had chosen her for Joseph's spotless bride,
That she might usher in Light from eternity.
“Hail Mary full of grace,” the angel sang,
And, blessing her, the nations with shouts rang.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

X—CRUCIFIXION.

The heavens here bend low, a mother's tears
Are in its eyes. The heights beneath, a scene
Of sorrow dares to spread, the earth and sky between.
On Calvary a cross its stature rears,

And on it hangs He of eternal years;
His kinsmen—Sion's blood and breed—are keen,
That every pang be His, that their vile spleen
Invents, and how they shout as His eye blears

In death. What a tableau is painted there,
Unseen of men! Ten thousand angels speak
With Him. The Father of His Son bereft,
Descended with His court, and its seat left
Vacant. The Holy Ghost, in death did seek
To console His agony with prayer.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XI.—WAR.

The storm's artillery rolled o'er the hills
To far antipodean shores; the sound
Was as the earthquakes, when it heaves the ground,
Which, opening, all that's living kills.

The combatants a moment curbed their wills,
Then strange forked fires belched from their great
siege guns—
A sunrise—that the sense of heaven stuns;
While tears torrential give vent to their ills.

And yet, the storm is jealous of us men
When we make war; the earthquake is ashamed,
And slinks back to its subterranean caves—
Mere urns—that would not make our soldiers'
graves;
Who now are pavements on each mount and glen,
For cavalries confounded and unnamed.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XII.—A PRAYER.

The night birds, dim-eyed, slyly mope about,
As if the day were a dark sullen lair,
And wander stealthily in fear; aye, doubt,
The sun teems light, and streams the high noon's
glare.

The while fond virtue, with a conscience stout,
Defies the sun and his meridian stare,
And puts the jungle of the day to rout,
Hilarious with joy, though bent with care.

I, too, the highways tread of the bright day.
What genius shall my trembling feet direct?
When, sightless between hemispheres, I grope,
Shall I grasp by the hand the spirit gay
And smile 'mid poetry and pain? Select,
O Holy Spirit! Thou art my only hope.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XIII.—AMBITION.

Ambition speaks in manner and in gait;
His eye usurps the office of his tongue,
Declaring by its vague and vacant state
The mind, that up among the stars is flung.

His stride reveals his proud and fiery spirit,
Whose aspiration lifts him from the earth,
And makes a commentary on his wit,
That's ill-content with station and with birth.

There's language in his cheek, his lips, his chin;
He thinks it foreign to the churls about,
Who're satisfied their clothes and food to win,
Nor ever dream of lordship or of gout.
But fools can read the dark code of the wise.
Beware! they're conning now your cunning eyes.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XIV.—CHARMS.

Beware of wanton spirits that fling their charms,
Like fragrant flowers, upon the wanton air;
For subtle substances sound no alarms,
But steal into the sense, like wolves the lair.

The compass they accost with gay welcome,
And straight unclasp the intent of the heart
To wayfarers, whose instinct sees the sum
Of all their wiles, without or star or chart.

Dear soul! take not such leave of your plain sense!
Indulge your hours of idleness with Grace!
Who treads in frailest bark the treacherous sea,
Courts there calamity—the recompense
Of sin; and when he sinks he leaves no trace,
And only mermaids chant his elegy.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XV.—THE POET.

With eagle's wings he soared o'er mine and mart,
Above earth's coffered gold and her quagmire;
On high with rarest frankincense on fire,
That rises from the altar of his heart.

He had of earth and air tasted the smart,
And swept the myriad strings of the mind's lyre;
Refused gold's lure, repressed his soul's desire,
And at the voice of wrong did ever start.

Alas! all this was little understood
By the coarse buzzards, devotees of day,
Who love the earth, and nestle in her lap.
How could they, for his mind's deep solitude
Was peopled with sublimities that lay
'Neath crust and wave; nor could they span the
gap.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XVI—HOME.

As Midas views his gold's abundant store,
And prides him on his bounty and his state.
My friendly rocks I tread with joy as great;
For this is home—this bleak and barren shore.

That's happiness. Besides, I hear the roar
Of waters as they swell and break; then tread
Again the highways of the deep, where still
Their minstrels make me music as they soar.

This is a rugged beach, my home, my tomb.
What else? I'll play my part and do the right;
'Tis all that Midas, with his gold, 'mid bloom
And glow of life can do. What pure delight
The mere word kindles in the hearts of men!
How sweet is home! The echoes sing amen.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XVII.—MY BOOKS.

When in the depth of some huge tome I dip,
Sorting the pearls, that once lay in the deep
Of some great mind, and from the heap
Cull sparkling gems, I give wan care the slip—

Cut loose his coils, and lurch his choking grip,
That fastened on me at the close of day;
And then, like one returned from death, I lay
Prostrate, rejoicing that I missed his whip.

Ah! free from care, comes now my sweetest hours—
Not from the honey-heavy trance of sleep,
Where dreams may come; nor from the sweet
converse
With friends; but from my books in prose and
verse,
That the long day their lonely vigil keep,
To leap into my arms, when black night lowers.

XVIII.—CUPID.

She sits as silent as the marble cold,
Her fires, like flint, are buried in the deep,
And there eternally their tomb would keep,
If not awaked from sleep by suitors bold;

Who, with instinct of miners seeking gold,
That trace its vein e'en in the living rock;
Will, doggedly, despite of heat or cold,
Pursue their quarry, though the gods should mock.

They shoot sharp arrows, though their eyes are blind.
No science aids their aim, nor shows the way;
For Cupid, reckless of high roads and low,
A new path blazes, where he wants to stray.
Sense is his sight; his darkness as the sloe;
Yet wins his trophy, when she's most unkind.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XIX.—JEALOUSY.

The torments of the damned, in hell's dread lake,
Cannot compare with thy green surges' lash;
As 'gainst our dykes corrosively they crash,
Making our earth and ocean heave and quake.

The thousand thongs, that whip vice at the stake,
Have not thy edge to wound the inward soul;
Nor all the ice-fields at the northmost pole
Could cool his heart or his great vengeance slake.

Can, then, Philosophy, Wisdom, or Art
Bring heaven to this hell, whose riving pains
Like bolts the oak, splinter the aching heart?
Nay, nay, but Prayer and Prayer alone that rains
On these great seas an oil to calm their rage—
Then invoke God your jealousy to cage!

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XX.—AMBITION.

The stars complained that other fields of space
Should have been given to their hosts ; the night
Was all too dark to let their legions bright
Shine as they ought, and their high office grace.

The scintillating sea longed for their race,
And aided by the moon, to them untrue,
With rolling tides promptly began to sue
The rebels, and fling bouquets in their face.

That eve, with pride, she viewed them in her wave ;
But seeing that the blue arch still was filled ;
From which pale copies only had been spilled,
She lured the storm to dig these babies' grave.
Then mad confusion he cast on the night,
Disgusted with ambition's deserved plight.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXI.—SORROWS.

The storm on high, with intermittent boom
of guns, and flashing sabres wreathed in smoke,
A din of echoes in the vale awoke,
That seemed of this earth to presage the doom.

And as we viewed great Jove's encircling gloom,
That downward dropped torrential cataracts;
Behold, an arch lifts o'er the farthest tracts
Of heaven, prismatic as June flowers 'n bloom.

How heavy hours like dragons of the death
Pour in our souls an utter, blank despair!
Yet on their heels come others, oh! so fair,
With summer skies and zephyrs sweetest breath.
Let sorrows then break o'er us every day,
If rainbows only gild our darksome way!

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXII.—MUSKOKA.

Some spirit, jealous of heaven's gorgeous dome,
With mosaics here would fix a paradise;
Casting rich emeralds down in shape and size,
As varied as the stars that o'erhead roam.

He'd have the lake a copy of heaven's foam,
White-capping its cerulean wave with sheen,
And there invite the traveller, wan of mien,
To bring his rod and line, and pastime tome.

Oh blessed spot! for here the haunts of strife,
And marts of competition are forgot.
The weary here are filled with nature's wine
And choicest viands, culled from teeming life.
If all the world could come, how its sore lot
Would be refreshed, in this Eden to dine!

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXIII.—THE CLOUDS.

Ah, Time! Would'st not this castle spare?
Whose form as gracious as blue bubbles blown
By wanton boys—high on the noble arch is thrown,
Of day—in outlines exquisite and rare.

Its boiling texture, fleecy and more fair
Than cities fired, flinging their substance high
Into the vast, as if some king were nigh
To gaze, as Nero did, on Rome's despair.

What folly! Fancy views this mimicry,
As things substantial, having frame and form
Of graceful tower and beetling battlement;
And yet was it not Fancy flung the norm
To Michael Angelo on mission sent,
To give St. Peter's, pomp and majesty.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXIV.—RESURRECTION.

'Neath coverlets of white the grasses sleep,
And dream of Tyrian dresses dyed last June;
Denied in their recesses dark the boon
Of peeping through the snows on heaven's steep;

Doomed in their alabaster caves to weep
The night and view their substance pine away,
While buds of beauty will the task essay
To break the locks, that their race prisoners keep.

Will every tomb ope thus its marble jaws,
And nature end its darksome reign of death,
And lift the ashes from our sunken brow,
Call back the smile, the laugh, the wonted breath
To dissipated dust? We all avow
The hope that rests on Faith and Nature's laws.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXV.—FRIENDS.

A robin pulled the latch-string of my heart
One day, and straight the portals opened wide;
For 'gainst the ground he beat his wings and sighed,
As if his spirit would in pain depart.

I'd sought him in the fields, the wilds, the mart;
I'd sought him in the forests filled with life,
But never looked amid the city's strife,
For one that with the zephyr's breath would start.

In dreams he came into my threshold, where
I welcomed him, and patted his smooth back,
And then we cooed as two doves in their cot.
We needed friends to brighten our lone lot,
And Providence, that felt our lack,
Provided them from out the earth and air.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXVI.—RESPITE.

The playful flakes that here erect their tent—
Portentous pyramids for Ptolemies
In form—are fickle as the flirting bees,
That fly as quick as thieves on booty bent.

But perhaps, since they come from heaven, they're sent
By angels to prepare a hostelry
For forlorn souls, while here to occupy,
And enjoy respite from sin's continent.

What a sweet thought! that there, cool and serene,
The famished souls, that fast in fires by night;
By day that perform embassies of fear,
Could rest them, and repair their scanty might;
Spent by their sufferings, and the flight between
Their Limbo and far-off where stars appear.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXVII.—DEMOCRACY.

Poor pity, piety's friend and ally,
Will hermit here at home; while war
His horrid cannon booms, wrecking his car,
And from cold death, their laurels, patriots buy.

It matters not to them the where or why
Or how; for as their trusty rifles fire,
When packed with powder, e'en so they aspire
Like their automata to do and die.

May sulphur burn this doctrine of the damned—
This parchment shrivel with its crazed decree,
Teaching that piety and brotherhood
Are pity and softness misunderstood,
And let democracy sane, strong, and free
Compel world-peace, when once the storm is calmed.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXVIII.—LOVE.

Love finds a hearty welcome everywhere,
As he flies to the palaces of earth;
E'en in the huts, teeming with toil and care,
He is received with deepest joy and mirth.

For, Patience languished as she scanned the air
And sea and land, oppressed with sickening dearth,
Until her eyes took on a hungry stare,
Like men on rocks marooned by ocean's girth.

Thou child of God! born in the Trinity—
True model of perfection on the earth—
Come thou whatever be thy form to me!
Come as a friend of tried enduring worth;
For he is better far than gems or gold;
In heaven itself they long such to behold.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXIX.—GRIEF.

When tongueless Grief embraces dark Despair
The sluices of the eye their salt tides roll
Adown the cheek; nor do they stop to spare
The sacred sanctuary of the bleeding soul.

They boil, they break full 'gainst the walled ramparts—
Invade the citadel; and once a breach
Is made in the breastworks, there quickly starts
A flood like breakers, beating on the beach.

Ah, woe is me; if once the sentinel,
That guards the gates, against the baleful tide
Breaks down! 'Tis then as if one opened hell,
And let its populace on waters ride.
Curb grief at once, ere dark Despair awake!
Volcanoes are the cause of the earthquake.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXX.—SONG.

The gift of song's an unction lent for ills
By God to men, that as they seek their goals,
They may with laughter, leap like mountain rills,
Mid sorrows, that pierce thro' and thro' their souls.

It was to angels given at the dawn
Of things, and when the spheres grew strong and
bright
They caught it up, and to men flung it on,
So pleased were they emerging from the night.

And now what rhythm runs from hell to heaven!
There's not one worm that doesn't so vibrate
In unison with worlds, that harmony
Has no discord. No wonder 'tis the leaven,
Our ills and ailments to attenuate,
And swell our hearts with Orpheus' minstrelsy.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXI.—THE LARK.

The lark, that makes the welkin ring at dawn,
Leaves soft, sweet music in the trembling spray,
That beats in unison with his first lay,
Who towards the stars a messenger has gone.

An inspiration he flung to the lawn,
Where harvesters begin their tuneful hum,
And lowing kine, uncalled, to maidens come,
Giving, like falling rain, their milk undrawn.

Such is his cheer, that the orbs overhead
Invite the morning's minstrel to their shore,
Where the long day he taught them his sweet song;
But evening coming, he betrayed a dread,
For his abandoned comrades on earth's floor,
So they came home with him, a tuneful throng.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXII.—THE BARD.

The bard is burdened with the truth's import,
And labors long to chasten the coarse throng
With crystal phrases musical as song—
Piano now as sleep, again as forte

As storms. He will not to the king pay court,
Or bow to plutocrats a creaking knee,—
Sit begging for fond adulation's fee,
Though it or death, were the last sad resort.

Blessed temper of the poet's fine, clear mind!
And sweeter still the incense of his heart!
How bright the fires burn in his manly soul!
He is the beacon of his floundering kind,
Erected on the headlands of sound art,
To lead them safely o'er life's deep and shoal.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXIII.—DEATH.

Dumb as the silent tomb, his clay rests here,
Beneath gnarled elms, reposing peacefully;
His spirit, with the moon, visits this sphere,
Far far from his house of eternity.

His flesh, not ashes for an urn, would make,
Confined beneath this little mouldering mound;
Yet, when the trumpet blows, it will be found
New-dressed, and with the mighty dead awake.

The long divorce of death is temporal;
The executioner who broke the bond
No monster is. Ah, no; he flattered hope,
That if for ages in his house men'd grope
Unmurmuring, some day, he'd steal her wand
And restore them in union eternal.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXIV.—PENTECOST.

Come, Holy Spirit! breathe into the Church,
Aye, into breasts of men, drugged dead with care,
Thy Pentecostal fires, and from their lair
Drive out the beasts, that reason's guidance lurch;

As when before the forest fires, menageries
Of birds and beasts, are seen to fly their homes,
Leaving to elves come from the higher domes
Of day their all, glad to escape these seas.

And so the demons in our soul will fly,
If Thou, Spirit Divine, will but vouchsafe
To dwell with us. Come then Thou Spirit bright!
Infuse Thy fires into my soul! I chafe
'Neath burdens. Purge me pure. For Thee I sigh.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXV.—THE PYRAMIDS.

These dateless tombs, rise massive in the air
Of Egypt, that is mystic in its mood
Of reverence toward corses that there brood,
Awaiting resurrection's trumpet blare.

The sun in pity, pours on them his glare,
To warm their earthen palaces of death,
And conjure to their mummies back the breath
Of kings, now dressed in dust of worms, that were.

Aye, Egypt! thou dost well to love thy dead!
Their names an inspiration is to youth,
Tha' ever emulate the honored sire.
These mighty moles are death's, and their empire,
Built by the hands of sons in very truth;
Of elements' inroads they have no dread.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXVI.—HONEST TOIL.

Unhappy princelings, long to billet here
With horny-handed laborers, who live
By trenching quarries and deep mines to give
Their little ones plain pottage, and to rear

Them, hardened to the ways of honest toil,
If not of hand, well, then, of heart and head;
For in this world are many kinds of toil,
And dig we must, if we would eat sweet bread.

There is no royal road to happiness,
And prince and pauper, must tread side by side
The thorny way, the rugged path, the beetling hill
Of life; for luxury and ease but kill
The noblest parts of man, and empty pride
Is an intrinsic curse, and cannot bless.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

.XXXVII.—A SMILE.

The progeny is myriad of smile.

The eye is unaware how it throws out
Its waves, to every shore a rippling rout,
That charm the crystal sands, yet not defile;

Indenting dimples deep for many a mile,
So that even the littlest pebbles reach
For one, until the far outstretching beach,
Falls 'neath thy spell, that hath nor whim nor guile.

A laugh is then a lively limpid lake,
That catches up the beauty of the sky,
And all the mountain grandeur, in its brow;
Only to fling them back from its bright eye
A thousand times more sweet like to endow
The sky with dimples as when infants wake.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXVIII.—THE ARCH.

This gorgeous arch, with myriad gems inlaid,
Unpedestalled, rests on the void somewhere;
Or is there still another arch as rare
Beneath, like some upturned arcade,

With which a splendid pericard is made
For this dear heart? May be that's right.
But whence comes all this scintillating light,
As helmets of an army new arrayed?

I know. The Maker when he made this dome,
And saw the sightless inner orb was dark,
He set in it as many silvery pearls
Around the opal, as would fool the lark
Into thinking, it was the morning come,
Whose banner o'er his heavy eye unfurls.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XXXIX.—THE PIANIST.

His aspen fingers trembled on the keys,
That kissed those angels in their oddest wiles,
And swooned, but rose again all smiles,
Breathing or bellowing weird, wild harmonies.

For Music loves his soul's fine ecstasies,
And thunders loud, or murmurs sweet and low,
As she divines the humor in the flow
Of passion and the ebb of these same seas.

Quixotic Muse! thou ne'er wast won by men!
Like your odd sisters, ever critical,
You woo the mystic soul and honor him
With all your witchery; that, like the wren
Or lark at morn, he carol to the call,
As Phoebus' rays with glory the earth limn.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XL.—THE NIGHT.

Night spreads her raven wings, o'er sea and land,
Their beauties blanketing from the bright eye
Of day, enamored of the earth. The sky,
Her minion, aids the empress bland.

Its myriad gaze pouring upon the strand,
While o'er the plain and mountain, it distils
Its sparkling dews, and thirsty vials fills
Of grass, for flocks as parched as desert sand.

Benevolent, sweet queen, that shares the reign
Of Phoebus, o'er the hemispheres of earth,
How soft and sweet is thy maternal rule!
The garish day with too much light, would stain
Our beauties, and make dull our sprightly mirth,
If thou didst not the earth, rest, sooth, and cool.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLI.—BLOSSOMS.

I gaze upon a sea that rolls as far
As eye can view, in oddest rythm ruled
By wanton winds, that never yet were schooled;
Nor is there ship or sail its wave to mar.

Queen Mab has nightly wandered in her car
To linger here; for here's the home of sprites,
That close their cabins' dainty doors o' nights;
And nought but morn can pry wide ope the bar.

Aye! Neptune would trade his great sea for this,
And Mab would leave her bower in the skies
To dwell in Niagara's vale, where rise
The perfumes of an Araby, and kiss
The sense, delirious made, by the first sight
Of paradise, set here for man's delight.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLII.—INNOCENCE.

However slowly consciousness unfolds its leaves,
Flinging the perfumes of its innocence
Like gems of Araby, breathing incense,
At last the libertine, though late, perceives

The heinousness of sin, and straight he grieves
To see the blighted, cold, livid remains
Of conscience dead, full of unsightly stains;
For vile temptation, that death often leaves

Behind it, made inroads as zephyr breathes.
Fond innocence is like a pure white flower,
That every morn receives its dewy shower,
And nightly, frost, that purity bereaves.
'Tis only when too late, it sees the fiend,
That was behind a seeming virtue screened.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLIII.—JUDGE NOT.

Rebuke the failure of the timid soul?
The winds do not woo constantly the sail—
Ever a zephyr, and, anon, a gale;
Yet navigation thrives 'neath their control.

The seas are fickle as changeful divorce;
They woo the shore, then win the mighty deep;
E'en to the Sun make love, the Moon asleep;
Still argosies dare tread their wonted course.

Judge not! Be not severe! Rarely condemn!
We're not inanimate and fixed by law,
But have the liberty to give and take.
'Tis easy in our lives to find a flaw,
And 'twas for these—for sin and for our sake—
Our Saviour did the crosses pains contemn.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLIV.—THE UNDERWORLD.

Ah, sensuality! a fiend thou art—
A curse that damns men to the underworld,
Where, 'neath the tyrant flag of lust unfurled,
March libertines, corrupt in mind and heart.

What profits it their garb to be severe,
If still a brutish nature dwells in it?
—If to consort with lilies they seem fit,
And have a raven soul black without peer?

'Tis everywhere, this sunken hemisphere;
Down fathoms deep beneath a crust of earth
That crushes them. Can we not shaft them up?
We all have tasted, their vile bitter cup.
Don't dare deny! The race was cursed at birth,
Yet grace and will can lift men to God's sphere.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLV.—WAR.

If heaven found a home on this sad earth,
A Kingdom it would be of radiant joy,
Where selfishness and lust and sin were coy,
And sloth would envy energies' rich worth;

Where anger, enmity, and hate would hide
Their ashamed heads, and don the cowl of monks;
To give to orphans alms, whose fathers died,
Their heads sundered by war, e'en from their trunks.

But Heaven is on earth, for God is there;
He's in the wind, the wave, the mountain, and the
glen,

The tide, the calm, the storm, the lightning's glare.
One place alone He's barred—the hearts of men;
They're beasts of prey; they forage for their food—
Spill blood in torrents, as on Holy Rood.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLVI.—CUPID.

Song is a speech sublime, vouchsafed to youth,
To utter moody musings of their love,
With clarion voice of chanticleer, forsooth,
Or the soft cooing of the turtle dove.

The scions of the earth and serfs uncouth,
When Cupid comes begin at once to sing;
Nor is there any bird upon the wing,
Will flute like them, in all the sunny South.

Love is the inspiration of sweet song,
And youth will have her only for his Muse.
To pour into the hearts of the gay throng
Sweet melodies, right reason, to confuse.
Of sense and reason Eros ne'er could boast,
Yet all men, some time raving, drink his toast.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLVII.—A KINGDOM.

That our Creator have in us a throne
There must a kingdom be, and that well ruled,
Where every several officer is schooled
In strict obedience; nor that alone,

He must have love, be brave and bright,
And do his part with care; and if there is
In our empire a rift in general bliss,
No rest! no none! till he has made it right.

The faculties are agents of the mind,
That is the image of the Sovereign Lord.
Behooves it, then, if the King there resides,
That they obey—his loving subjects, as the tides
Obey the moon; and working with accord,
An empire perfect, they make in its kind.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLVIII.—YOUTH.

Youth is the rarest of all earth's rich mines,
Unshafted yet by vice's thieving drill,
Undug by passions that undo the will,
Nor flooded by the fume and damp of wines.

What must he do, then, with his treasure-house
Of innocence and virtue? Lock it up,
For fear the world should fill his early cup
With sin, and let sloth drowse and drowse?

There's danger in exploits on sea and land,
There's danger navigating the thin air,
There's danger in the trial of untried youth,
But we must dare the death, and oh; how grand,
If wounded in life's war, victory, forsooth,
Should crown us with its laurels rich and rare.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XLIX.—MIRRORS.

The eyes are oft the mirrors of men's souls,
And, like volcanoes, that at times burn bright,
Flinging their fiery torrents 'gainst the night,
Our visages gleam red as living coals,

Betraying the uncanny force that rolls
Within—of selfishness or love or hate,
Whose urgency will anon ope the gate
Of prudence, that erstwhile their fire controls.

'Tis well! for the great earth would else explode,
And in the eyes of heaven splinters stick
If the Aetnas were sealed; and tears, they say,
Of joy and grief, that seem but to corrode,
Give ease unto the heart with sorrows sick,
And happiness, a hint, its only clay.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

L.—IDEALS.

The incense of our age perfumes the shrine
Of Mammon; and beyond his temple ease
And wealth and pleasure we seek, and the wine
Of luxury our jaded tastes to please.

Nor reck we of ideals that elevate
The mind and heart into that heaven of light
Where patriots labor and die for the State,
And saints serve God and man with pure delight.

A common curse has baned the human breed,
And they decay and die in opulence—
The direst poverty, where men are freed
From laws of industry and common sense;
And while the ardent hours away in sloth
That to rust out in idleness are loath.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LI—EMPERESS OF IRELAND.

Death, lurking near, would not be long denied,
And rushed into the hole stove in her heart,
Like many waters, there in stealth to bide
Till he could drag her to dark caves apart.

Now fills her arteries a foreign flood,
That clogs the bright gear and puts out the fire,
While, startled like a steed, upright she stood,
Till down she plunged like an inverted spire.

She paves the sea's floor now, that had refused
Her anchorage, aware of her foul fault.
In dragging down her victims, while abused
By her immunity from death's assault.
The sea is mistress of the vasty deep,
No Empress else can there her kingdom keep.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LII.—DALLIANCE.

Ye amorous things, like cooing doves, avaunt!
The garish day abhors, at heart, such play;
When it ekes out hardly 'mid blare and bray
Wherewith to live. For misery is gaunt,

And always stalks quite near the human haunt,
If laziness, or sloth, or play steal there
The time; when men save up a part to spare,
For age's imbecility and want.

Wise worldlings! Ye have wisdom, wit, and worth;—
Have time and place for providence; your lives
Full flow the ebb, as does the measured sea,—
And have a place reserved while here on earth
For ease and play; for who is he that strives
A slave, but dies undone of destiny.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LIII.—WAR.

The armies in embrace of blood were locked,
And as the tide, moved by the moon, they swayed
Forward and back, and though in steel arrayed,
Like ships on the crest of the wave, they rocked,

In doubtful conflict, and each other shocked,
All day. Victory watched the full crimson flood;
While the embattled combatants poured blood
Into Mar's maw, and o'erhead vultures flocked.

Stay Mars! Plant not this mad insanity
In men! You see their paroxysms rage.
The demons have in hell no wilder rout.
The food of cannons they're destined to be,
Or cruel conquerors—the horrid wage
Of Tyranny and Greed that Mercy flout!

SONNETS OI' A RECLUSE.

LIV.—NAPOLEON.

I sit here in my chair, huge chair of rock,
By nature fashioned, and the Fates for me—
Relentless and impassioned votary
Of power. It's seated on the wave. The shock

Of many a sea beats here, like a great clock,
Against its brow, which frowns and casts them off;
They hurry in confusion to their trough;
Yet not downcast, they sneer at it and mock.

Then I am safe, in this lone watery zone
To fulminate my laws. No! I'm a sot;
For 'tis a prison, this great chair my throne,
And my ambition save fame, gained me nought;
Nay, lost a world, and with it my dear soul,
For slaughtered innocents bar me heaven's goal.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LV.—FRIENDS.

O Surgeon! canst thou cure this fiendish joy
At friendship's death? For contradiction here
Confounds itself in hating what is dear,
Or seems to be until frail faults annoy;

Showing themselves, 'neath the gold's base alloy,
Concomitants, that reinforce the strength
Of strands, reaching to life's uttermost length,
Which else 'mid elements were a mere toy.

The great Apothecary made of simples, friends,
And with rich alchemy gilded the whole,
Until they stood before him paragons!
Can He not make them like the oak that bends
Before the gale, and lifts his head at once,
Keep continent as temper's tempests roll?

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LVI.—TIME.

Time will not tarry, howsoe'er we're loath
To keep in step, or march in rank with others;
For guard he must the world's decay and growth,
The dying and the multiplying mothers.

Aye! and beyond the pale of moon and stars,
Excluding not their court from his high care,
He compensates the sun if ought him jars,
And keeps his courtiers whirling in the air.

Think you he will, when energy's run out
O'erturn at once his empty glass of sand,
To hurry off with the eternal rout,
Seeking eternity on God's great strand?
Time holds the watch for matter in the race,
But hies him hence when there is nought, e'en space.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LVII.—A JOY RIDE.

Our ship glides o'er the seas' vast billowy meads,
Grazing the daisy beds just blowing white;
Her bow flings off a thousand silvery beads,
That mimick the gems of imperial night.

The cynosure of heaven, she keeps in sight,
As o'er the valleys and the mounts she sweeps;
As surely sailing as the eagle's flight,
When toward the eyry his swift course he keeps.

How witching 'tis to-night to haunt the sea!
Our mystic ship sailing like a great ghost,
White-shrouded in her winding sheets, that flee
Before the winds, as do the fleecy host
Of heaven! No Emperor upon his throne
Such thrilling joy as this, I vow, doth own.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LVIII.—PROGRESS.

No! progress ne'er has lagged behind in gait,
But always hitched her wagon to the stars,
Escorting kings of every trade and state,
Who labor to amend the jolts and jars,

That incident are to advancing good,
Come they through the perversity of men;
That merely seek enough of sleep and food
“Things as they are,” blessing with an amen;

Or the mere weight of things, mortised and set
By custom deep down in society
Resisting. Aye; she's placed the world in debt,
By blazing ways, out of deep drudgery.
Columbus ploughed the seas for continents;
Galileo traversed high heaven's tents.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LIX.—CUSTOM.

Shall Custom so enthrall, or the stern forms
Of this cold, selfish world so harden us,
That, like trained beasts, we still obey the norms
Of rulers, who enjoy the world's surplus;

And batten on the toil of misery,
Pretending, that they do conciliate
Misfortune, and deserve the sympathy
Of toil, for letting it till their estate?

Abominable Custom—brigandry!
That scarcely leaves men crumbs or curds or whey!
Besides their lands are spoils, not property,
And must return to honest folk some day.
Yet be magnanimous! obey the Law!
Else on our heads God's just revenge we'll draw.

LX.—MELANCHOLY.

Deep melancholy mints, a world of care
From bullion, that is free from trace of dross;
Creating in false moulds eternal loss,
That still defy both faith's and hope's repair.

It turns men's choicest words and deeds most rare
To poisons, that would the soul's life destroy.
Like gold by acids harsh turned to alloy,
Though once than all earth's beauty far more fair.

Away with thoughts that earth and heaven mar!
We'll have no moods that cloud and kill the mind!
This orb of ours was born beneath a star
Which still presides, benevolent and kind.
Give us the bright sun and belief in God,
And Melancholy flies at His first nod!

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXI.—PASSIONS.

The feral beast, laired deep within our breast,
A fairy forest has for his abode,
Where hibernating, they, his sleep oft goad
To growls. Aye, it is well if their wild guest

Do not, while yet with heavy eyes oppressed,
Range forth and roar and run beyond control;
Unleashed by little hands from the dark hole
He slumbers in, to procure passion's quest.

Would that the Senses let alone his sleep!
They are his keepers, placed there from on high,
With charter large enough, of liberty;
Without arousing Lust with them to leap
Over the precipice that's always nigh,
And beetles o'er sin's bituminous sea.

LXII.—PROSPERITY.

The cankers of prosperity corrode,
More than ingratitude's base serpent stings;—
Than Winter's biting wind with frost it flings
Of age and sorrow—o'er our frail abode

Of flesh; or Phoebus' arrows, when they goad
Us to the earth; or the ice streams of chance,
That chill the temper hard and quite derange
The molecules, that nature in men sowed.

But does it not nurse diseases that die;—
Give opportunity her needed sphere,
Where talent's flight is with the eagles high,
And charity can dry the scalding tear!
E'en so Adversity is nature's school,
And purifies the world with its hard rule.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXIII.—ADVERSITY.

A woman's rage, war's wounds, the north wind's fangs,
Bites not like this. Adversity devours
My soul; disease with hollow eyes still glowers
At me; while nature whelps the thousand pangs

•She owes me. Misery her mission gangs
Has huddled on my back. I cannot see;
'Tis dark. I sail in despair's deepest sea,
While in its sky a night of horror hangs.

Thus plagued, "what's being worth," my soul cries out.
Reason is silent, dares not make reply.
For desperation rejects argument;
But Faith, whose rock is used to the waves' rout,
And the vast maelstrom that rolls o'er the sky—
Whispers, these purify the soul's content.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXIV.—THE SUN.

The torrent of the Sun, that drenches day,
Gives granaries and dynamoes to men,
And mines of anthracite beyond their ken,
To feed and warm them while on earth they stay.

Besides, it lends the moon her pale moist ray,
And all the stars their silvery, shimmering light,
That we may foil dark Erebus and night,
And o'er the earth and sea still safely stray.

Ah, then! thou great beneficent bright orb,
That measures the sweet music of the spheres,
Make men with music's melody resound!
Unwholesome vapors with thy rays absorb,
That all earth's eyes blur, as with many tears,
Till land and sea with smiles and joy abound!

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXV.—FOLLIES.

When one has cast off Follies' coil—though sweet
The embrace was of death, for such is sin—
Broad, deep discolored marks corrode the skin,
And, like the zebra, circled round complete

With stripes, we, too, are ribbed e'en to the feet
Far deeper than we dream. 'Tis in our soul
The wounds are sunk—disreputable scroll,
Deciphered only, where the angels meet.

'Tis well that men cannot read your dark code,
For then the blind eye and the empty sleeve—
Our honor's badge, and the bronze on our breast,
Aye! and the amputated limb a load
Would be for us; we could no one deceive,
E'en o'er our scars grim garlands we did weave.

LXVI.—SUITORS.

As fond birds woo the air, the galleys do the sea,
Yet, when the waves embrace their keels and fly
Like frightened fauna, they sink, rise, and sigh,
For they are sailors just leaped from the quay.

Already there they learned sly coquetry,
And down they slipped their sluices to the bay;
For, thinking in their hearts 'twas only play,
They rushed into her bosom watery.

Too late it dawned on them it was amiss
To rudely plunge into the water's deep,
Not knowing the sly wiles of Neptune's bride—
Her infidelity and fatal kiss—
The deep deception of her seeming sleep,
Inviting them to sail her fickle tide.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXVII.—COMPLAINT.

Complaint will find the thunder's tongue thus pressed
By recklessness, that rides in purple state
O'er rights turned wrongs—perverted by the great
And proud at their sweet will. For the light jest

And gaze of high contempt on the distressed,
Who dig the garden, plough the field, and sleep,
Their slaves in fact, if not in name, and creep
'Neath their disdain, would rankle Meekness' breast.

E'en now Protest vents sullen, deep unrest
Against Oppression, and with mighty roar,
As of the storm his voice rises to God,
Who gave the earth to all men to be bless'd,
And wills that purple plutocrats restore
To wretchedness a share of sea and sod.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXVIII.—DREAMS.

High up the mountain side the shepherd lad
Was watching o'er his flock. The silver moon
In pity, for she ruled the stars, the boon
Of langour cast on him, and soon the glad,

Sweet trance of sleep crept o'er his heavy soul.
At once he hurried hence and joined the stars
That twinkled just between Venus and Mars,
Until the reveillie and hurrying roll

Of Phoebus' car came booming in his ear.
How bright the golden chariot of morn
Was to his waking eyes? He cursed Dian
Deluding him with dreams, and shed a tear
As the stars bade adieu, tired and forlorn,
To day, who rules this hemisphere for man.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXIX—VESUVIUS.

Towards heaven's starry dome the meteors flow;
An awful night of smoke rolls up with gleams,
Till candled heaven is dimmed, and mingled screams
Of every living thing, of friend and foe,

Arrange with treble thunder's toll. The flow
Of lava vomited from earth's entrails
Sick unto death, and hurled on high by gales,
Seems come from hell, these mountains far below.

Vesuvius! soft now! Oh, cruel heart!
Relent the nonce thine awful savagery;
And if thou wouldest a lesson men impart
Mix Mercy's bowels with thy tyranny!
For here between your throne and old Ocean
Mere mortals can not hope death's gorge to shun.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXX.—SNOW.

Untrumpeted by thunder's sterterous voice,
The soft and silent snow steals down the height,
And clothes the dusky bosom of the plain in white
Lilies, that dupe distinction's finest choice.

They fall from flower gardens, where the noise
Of earth's unheard, up in the Milky Way;
That so abounds with floss, they throw away
Enough to make a winter, and rejoice

The earth. Come petals, then, of purity
And cleanse the earth and air, whose very hearts
Will leap to see your flaky flags of peace
Fall on the dusky denizens of marts
And fields, enlisting them the nonce to cease
Their labors vain, and join the white tourney!

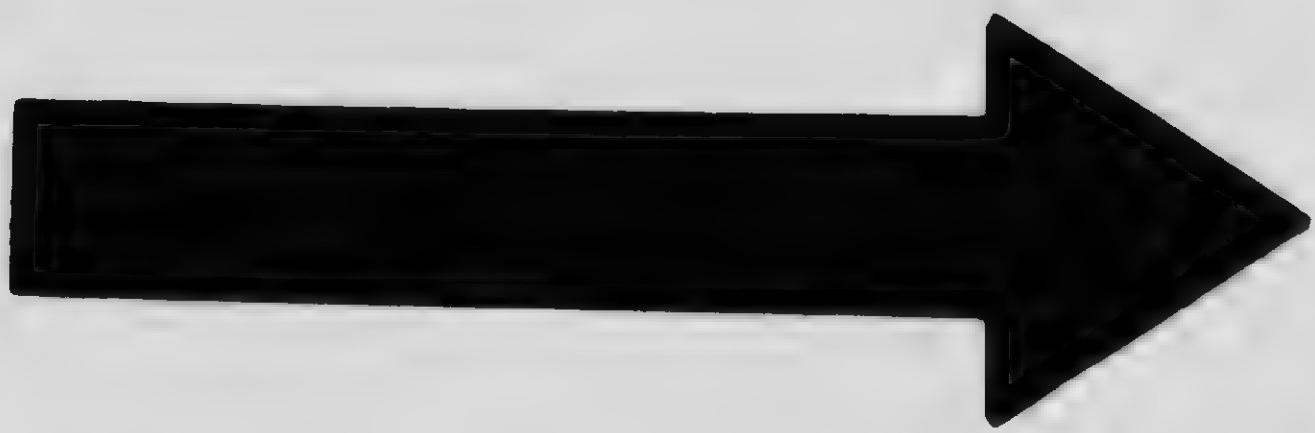
SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXI.—DOING GOOD.

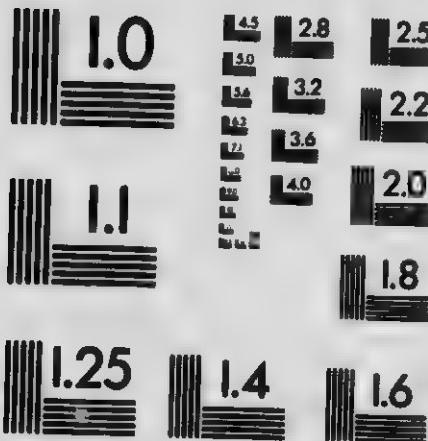
You've learned the luxury of doing good,
'Tis the high office of the angel host,
For they are guardians of the farthest coast,
Of souls and cities of the earth. The flood,

The field, the fold, the forest, and the brood,
That in them sleep enjoy their tutelage.
We, too, must play like part on the world's stage,
In castle or in hut in solitude.

What matters it? His theatre is large
Or little, by design of Providence.
Does he his part, his duty well discharge?
And of his store some charity dispense?
He'll wear gems rich as seas set in their marge,
With complimentary joys immense.



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SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXII.—MISFORTUNES.

Lear-like, I'll rave and roam the blasted heath,
Some hovel baned with toads my hearth shall be;
With Timon I will claim affinity,
And to the antlered wilds my days bequeath.

For they have picked my purse, the crutch of age,
And left me here to starve and limp alone,
Till contraries confound and make me moan
And loathe both Fate and Fortune in my rage.

Contempt alone communes with Misfortune,
Which straight is sneered at by the wanton mob,
Who glut their pleasures, while poor me they shun
As snakes; but virtue of its sting doth rob
Adversity e'en on the heath. I'll run
My sands out, here, though ills me fast maroon.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXIII.—INTRIGUE.

The sabled Midnight queen of sea and land
Caressed the ebbing and the flowing Tide;
As we debauched its bosom's swelling pride,
And rudely sought the gems on her far strand.

Well-seasoned sailors our staunch vessel manned,
And wines and viands in her vaults were stocked;
Yet how Precaution on her throne was shocked,
As suddenly we rode sheer on the sand.

Ah! meek blue sea! Why didst thou not resist?
Didst thou plant there these quicksand-cruel shoals.
That ope their jaws as the wild water rolls
Its victims on their banks to sink or list?
Or midnight queen wasn't thou with her in league?
Or was it nefast Neptune's damned intrigue?

LXXIV.—JEALOUSY.

What irony! Plague on the night! Thick gloom
Pours down upon the earth, start'ling mid-day.
And blinding sand-storms mar th .pright ray
Of Phoebus, presaging eternal doom,

And on the distant hills, war 'gins to boom
And belch her fires, from the red roaring mouth
Of twice ten thousand cannons in the south—
Usurpers of the day and the sun's room.

Both night and day were jealous of the storm ;
The one to be displaced in b's mid-reign,
The other high complaisance could not feign
At usurpation of his wonted form ;
So day forthwith took back the fires he loaned.
And night recalled the foolish clouds she owned.

LXXV.—THE UNWARY.

A nymph in white stood by the sea one day,
And gazed intently on the opal waves,
Forgetting quite the deep and haunted caves,
Where, ambushed from her sight, Temptation lay.

She knew not he was reckless to betray,—
Would walk the shifting quicksands of the shore,
And gaily tempt the minatory roar,
To win what beauty there might stray.

E'en though the noisy cataracts were still,
And quicksands turned their beds to solid rocks,
And all foul demons had been stowed in stocks.
Enough there were of dangers yet to kill
The innocent, unwary, trusting soul,
Treading the rugged way to virtue's goal.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXVI.—NIAGARA.

The cataracts in their huge coils enclose
The toiling freight, as would the Python's folds;—
More tightly than the miser his pelf holds,
Or addled age his youth's sweet blushing rose.

Straight to Niagara's abyss it flows,
As downwards in the Tropics pours the night;
It struggles 'gainst the monster with all might,
But numberd here is Fate among its foes.

Now nought can snatch the victims from his clutch.
Whether they sought out death, disdaining life;
Or merely to escape age's vile crutch,
Or their high noon's inevitable strife.
In their impasse, what profits it the cause?
This cruel gorge imposes them their pause.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXVII.—ASCENT.

Will souls rise up with morning's crystal wings
When we steal from this carnal cage, which hangs
From silken threads of life;—when death's sharp
fangs
Have gnawed our hold on the frailest of strings?

Shall we ascend, treading the way that brings
Men to the rugged heights of righteousness,
E'en though misery and want rudely caress,
And sorrow o'er our path its shadow flings?

As surely as the tide, ruled by the moon,
Sojourning, breathless, a brief time on shore
To gather strength, begins again to rise,
We shall on wings mount even to the skies,
There to repose with saints, who've gone before,
In mansions where the blest enjoy heaven's boon.

LXXXVIII.—A BURIAL.

The shafts of light, piercing the clouds that hang,
Black barriers, the earth and sky between,
Like darts, have wounded, sabled night, with keen,
Clear edge, until she groaned with death's dread pang.

Anon and ever she her swan-song sang,
Rehearsing softly all her life's career,
As weeded queen of half the earthly sphere,
Until the Angelus of morning rang.

Her death the Dawn was garlanded with light;
And as the faithful stars opened her tomb,
Phoebus stood by, most modestly to close
Her sunken eyes, bereft of sparkling sight,
Consigning her and them to deepest gloom,
To give in other hemispheres repose.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXIX.—MATTER.

Is the earth permanent? Think you will things
Sublunar fall at last? And by the law
Of weight will they rush in the gaping maw
Of neighboring orbs, or leap to Saturn's rings,

Which for the playful orbs of heaven it tings?
Mayhap they will fly to the burning sun,
Which is so charming that our rivers run
To him, on rays swift as the lightning's wings.

Even so! What of Saturn and the sun?
Must they repeat unfortunate earth's fate,
And fall at length into nonentity?
The query opes a cavern deep and dun,
Unleashing labyrinths tied to the gate,
With deep wide mouths insatiate as the sea.

LXXX.—WAR.

The cavalry to war, as billows roll,
His ravening dogs men's very bones devour,
And nothing mortal, nay, no living power,
But falls a victim to his merciless soul.

For ever and anon the thunders toll
The knell of death, there quartered in the clouds.
Soon man and horse, wrapped in no silken shrouds,
Beneath a mound lie, not an Adrian's mole.

Thou curse! Which splendid Sherman has called hell.
Did he in dreams hear the heart rending groan
Of the damned souls, and smell the reeking smell
Of burning bodies, as they, tortured, moan?
Aye! for awake he found no means to tell
If war or hell usurped an earthly throne.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXI.—CHARITY.

How much must one give of his garnered store?
Must we give all, a starving man to feed?
The word is murder to the miser's greed,
And makes him grip his gold and count it o'er.

But he's atavic. We love Him Who bore
Our sins upon the cross, sowing the seed
Of charity in blood. We fear no need,
When He feared none, shedding for us His gore.

No greater love than this man hath, than give
His life to save his friend. But how dare we
To equal Him? There is bald blasphemy.
But short of that in spirit let us live
Abstemious, 'midst toil and industry,
And give our life, not as Christ on the tree.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXII.—DEPUTIES.

These stewards of their stores angels employ,
Nor with an itching palm hoard they their wealth
With usury and barren breed by stealth;
But spangle bright the gold and the alloy,

Which nature spreads with wantonness, though coy,
By night on dappled seas and dimpled lands;
On mountain peaks and shimmering Orient strands,
That would the cherubs from their bowers decoy.

Then twinkle still, you bright and burning stars!
and sing night's thrilling song with harmonies,
That linger in the world's banqueting hall;
As wheeling on in your pellucid cars,
You answer, like the choiring birds, the call
Of angels, who know well their deputies.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXIII.—DULLARDS.

The god of day flings from his fiery zone
His rays with light and heat to comfort us;
The silvery moon of earth, all amorous,
Streams down her stores, albeit 'tis but a loan;

The stars, those gems so prodigally won
In heaven's fields; the wide reach'd of space,
Revealing nightly, safe conduct our race,
As if we, each a king, were on his throne.

What dullards we! not reading right the scroll,
Writ on the parchment of the universe—
The charter, glowing with our splendid dower—
To think it all an accident or worse;
And live unmindful of the Almighty Power
That orders all and is creation's goal.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXIV.—VILLAINY.

What villainy! Be not so sure! There's doubt;
There's faulty make or in the heart or head;
Hence Mercy should take Persecution's stead,
For fibres false, that sag with the years' rout,

Destroy the heart and 'ward to Time the bout,
And Freedom too's a burden hard to bear;
Behold the fate of angels bright and fair!
And yet who would this gem of glory flout.

Heredity and Freedom! Dangerous boon!
Ye form a legion 'gainst the highest power,
And sway man's destiny for ill or good;
And, too, it were to hide the sun at noon,
To rob man of that high distinctive dower,
Or change his blood e'en if fond nature could.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXV.—DOGS OF DEATH.

Unleash your dogs of death in the vast deep,
And in the air to range, unkennel them !
No more shall ships and swords the war-tide stem,
Or fate of trembling kings and empires keep.

For o'er their heads, on the high heavens steep,
Fly birds in brass and iron, seeking prey,
And 'neath their feet, shielded from light of day,
Swim fish, that mock at things, that wake and sleep.

The Trojan horse, with treachery in his breast,
Did not deceive. Scylla and Charybdis
No ambush planned; for men have wits and see;
But when Death steals beneath the curling crest
Of seas unseen, and sailing the depths kiss
Of heaven's lake, what chance has life to be ?

LXXXVI.—LUXURY.

Now, o'er the sleeping valley there arose
A giant form, that flew slowly across
The fields, as flies the ominous albatross
O'er ships to haunt their citizens' repose.

Under the shadow of this awful guest,
They cuddled close, in numbness soon to die,
While winds in sympathy, did moan and sigh
Like spirits, round some hovel long obsessed.

But 'twas a phantom rigged out in the brain
By ease, licentious luxury, and sloth;
That in their heavy lethargy are loath
To buffet bracing air with manly strain;
And so men sleep with devils in the deepest hell,
Too drugged to rise again from their dread cell.

LXXXVII—BAPTISM.

The labor of the nations, in the throes
Of war, gives birth to a posterity,
New christened, not in water, but a sea
Of human blood. Their fathers were all foes,

And fought, as demons fight, on winter snows,
To dye them red, and feed the hungry ground,
As if the sodden flat and thirsty mound
Would grow nought else, but the red blushing rose.

Their sons will have a happy peaceful lot,
For Baptism wipes out all pain and sin,—
Especially of blood; besides, they're white
And wounded in their fathers; they won't fight;
But to the ploughshare and the loom begin
To turn, to restore home—one horrid blot.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXVIII.—PRIVILEGE.

Don't say the weak, can war against the strong,
Who're buttressed as the deep eternal hills,
And rest upon as strongly anchored sills,
Whether 'tis right or unblushingly wrong!

But aren't the weak, a mighty swarming throng,
And could they not, if they but only knew,
And in the bitter balance their naught threw,
Put Plutocrats and Powers where they belong!

Indeed! but there's the rub, for Privilege
Is wily and has wits, to watch the growth
And gathering of the tide, that would be loath
To bear their weight for long; and as the sedge
Is born before the boat, they press to war
The mob, and miss the menace they abhor.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

LXXXIX.—COMPENSATION.

'Tis fond to look for compensation here,
Where Injury and Loss are poor and weak ;
And Right—has it a title as gems clear—
Is unheard, though with thunders' voice it speak.

They're deaf, the mighty of the earth, to cries
Of victims, louder than the lion's roar ;
That go to heaven for vengeance, with their sighs
And tears, and open wide the golden door.

For high of import is their wail, nor vain,
And Justice in the end will hold high sway,
When earthly might, robbed of pretentious clay,
Will in God's prison suffer exact pain,
For all the crime done, in their day on earth,
To meek and humble souls of sterling worth.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XO.—THE FIRST FALL.

'Twas bolted by the northern mills for earth;
It drops down like the slow distilling rain
That falls from the alembics of the main
On high; it fills men with a childish mirth.

The fleecy clouds, have not its look or worth,
That spill the honey heavenly dews of morn,
And glad the grass, now wan, worn, and forlorn,—
Giving to every blade a second birth.

How it delight me, when I see it fall!
I know not that the summer heats have burned
My soul, and dried the rivers of my busy heart;
For at thy sight like freshets that do start,
And all my desert to a grove is turned
As I behold thee flung o'er heaven's wall.

XCI.—THE SNOW.

Think you these flakes are Manna flung from heaven,
That fall in benediction on thy head,
And 'neath thy feet; make carpet where you tread,
As white as hawthorn buds, by zephyrs driven?

Are they the floss that float across the walls
Of paradise, wherein they keep sweet flowers,
To perfume their own happy homes and bowers,
And garland with bouquets their banquet halls?

Not so! They're messengers all robed in white,
Their faces blanched, for they have in their keeping
Such words, as make men meditate on death.
They typify, but speak not of the blight
Of years; for Winter comes, awake or sleeping,
On our heads, and chokes us with frosty breath.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XCII.—THE DAWN.

The hills are touched by Dawn while yet the vale
Sleeps 'neath the blanket of the Night; full half
The vineyards and the swards the last dews quaff,
And all the stars, receding, weep and wail.

Anon, enamored, she creeps down the dale.
And softly lifts the dark from off the farms,
Awaking them full soft, not with alarms,
Nor rudely, with the thunder-ridden gale.

Then how they gasp and gaze up in her face,
All wreathed with gold of gorgeous alchemy!
They cheer with pure delight as the forlorn
And weary Night retires, and with one race
They rush as waves on the wind-driven sea,
To snatch the first kiss of the smiling Morn.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XCHI.—RETAINERS.

Retainers labor for your highness' fee,
And do their duty with religious zest;
The cross or crown is theirs, while it's your crest,
But, with the flight of Fortune, they, too, flee.

They fawn on her and with her whim agree,
Be it the enemy's or friendly camp,
And burn sweet incense and the votive lamp,
To the bright goddess with the golden key.

Ah! for a man that would out-do the dog
In sheer devotedness, that loves his lord,
E'en when the bolts of death have riven his head,
Or madness makes him dwell on heath or bog!
I'd starve and live with him in full accord,
E'en though the elements fellowed his bed.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XCIV.—NOVELTY.

When gods are jealous virtue is a sin,
And things that are are not; contraries seek
Peace; contradiction ceases its dread din,
And essences exchange, as every freak

Or fashion hastily proclaims its sway.
The waters now refuse to slake the thirst,
To laugh and leap and tumble in our way;
The fire no longer warms, nor roses burst

Their Hybla hearts, intoxicating far
And near the air, with perfumes that we'd wed,
Fond peace impetuously goes to war,
Lurching the garlands grim from his stern head.
Thus change and novelty chafe with their banks,
And yet these gravel beds deserve loud thanks.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XCV.—THE PIONEERS.

Bold pioneers bore rocks, and sink their shafts,
In nature's cloistered mines, and oily seas,
And skim the deep and sky in their frail crafts,
By need oft driven like the honey bees.

They challenge the unknown, and forth have ranged
Through wilds and wastes with very lightning's dash,
And for the vaguest quest have oft exchanged
Their lives—and fame or gold and such vile trash.

Columbus and Galileo, by vasts
Of sea and sky, invited, dared the death,
And leaped into their depths, facing the blasts
Of controversy with their dearest breath.
Is it luck, courage, or profound insight
That helps them lift from continents the night?

XCVI.—SLEEP.

Deepens the hush as evening shadows come,
The soft-songed zephyrs cease to swoon and sigh,
And on the hearth the cricket's song is dumb,
As Night brings Silence with her from the sky;

To watch the darling destinies of sleep,
Whose kingdom counts all living things on earth,
And all the barking thunders kennelled keep,
While life pursues in dreams vainest of mirth.

There all the panorama of the day
In gilded iteration is done o'er;
Fantastic as the plume of peacock gay,
Or rainbows, that arch cataracts that roar.
The ocean in its finny peopled deep
Has not the teeming life of dreaming sleep.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XCVII.—TEMPTATION.

Come on in flocks and herds, ye grovelling beasts!

Aye! dress yourselves in amethyst and gold;
More subtle than the unseen wind that yeasts
The sea! I'll meet you on the deck or hold

And fight it out! Or, if you choose to woo
Me with sweet, subtle, and seductive charm,
When I, distracted, daily duties do,
That way will cause me nor fear nor alarm.

I'll search you out, and smite your hidden head
With scorpions. I'll not endure your wrongs.
You will not reign a monarch in my stead.
I'm king, and crush I will your hateful throngs.
Temptation's dynasty counts a vast horde;
They'll not usurp my throne, my vow, my word!

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XCVIII.—PARTIALITY.

The Polar star, 'mid high confines and blue,
Stands sleepless sentinel o'er all the host,
That range both far and near the coast,
Which was allotted him for night's review.

And when erratic orbs dire trouble brew,
And steal alone into the vaults, he holds
Them with pearl strands—the lovers' ardent folds—
Till they return, when famished, whence they flew.

Such providence parental he vouchsafes
To vagabonds, who nightly wander far
From home, while there the Milky-way remains
With measured step, nor ever frets or chafes;
Yet when the Prodigals return they are
Embraced, while Piety's reward is chains.

SONNETS OF A RECLUSE.

XCIX.—DIPLOMACY.

Yon burning planet, that with fiery pace,
Anon and ever to our orb returns
Ambassador accredited, and burns
The earth's low, modest sphere to grace;

Is sent from courts afar of royal space,
To help the moon rule o'er the fickle tide:
But as it seemed to wound her jealous pride,
At once he hastened his retreat to trace.

It were the diplomat indeed, if he
Would linger near earth's orb, until he gained
Consent from the imperious, haughty queen
To do her errands without praise or fee,
And when she to a midget was nigh waned,
He could o'er come her bitter, peevish spleen.

C.—THE STORM.

In fear I cowered 'neath the welkin's fires,
And shuddered as Jove's belching batteries roared;
While rank on rank succeeding sank and soared,
Like sons who emulate their warlike sires.

Yet, as the line, suffused with smoke, retires,
The fields of blue put on their diadem,
Studded with many a rich and sparkling gem,
Culled from the mines of heaven's rich empires.

The grandeur of the storm's belligerent king
Is seen; when Calm, advising his retreat,
With winning smiles and dimpled comely grace;
He smooths his scowling front and fiery face;
Retaining nought of hatred or of sting
Against the powers of Peace in defeat.

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